

Submitted Testimony

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Hi and thank you for taking the time to listen to consumers, providers, and advocates. I am here today as a behavioral health provider; one type of mental health service. I am a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), licensed behavior analyst in the state of New York, and the Executive Director of Applied Behavioral Strategies, LLC an agency providing Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy services to children with behavioral needs. We also serve children autism under Public Act No. 09-115.

I am writing to support many parts of SB 1089 designed to address mental health needs of children in our state. We now know from evidence from the Newtown Tragedy, that Adam Lanza needed services he didn't get. This bill, in many of its parts, will help ensure that another child doesn't fall through the cracks like he did.

Attorney Jen Laviano and Andy Feinstein, commented on the failure of the Newtown Schools for failing to identify the educational and behavioral needs of Adam Lanza and for not addressing them (Connecticut Mirror, December 9, 2014). This bill, in many of its parts will help address that problem.

As a behavior analyst, I use Applied Behavior Analysis to address behavioral needs of children like Adam Lanza. I use interventions to decrease excess problem behavior and I teach appropriate skills that may be missing from a child's repertoire. As such, I am especially in support of licensure for Behavior Analysts as proposed in sections 23-29 of SB 1089.

Such a license would protect consumers of behavioral services. For example, I currently provide behavioral services to a young man we will call John Doe. When his parents reached out to me for assistance, John was just 8 years old and he was physically aggressive to his teachers. His parents had been receiving behavior services from a person who was not certified or licensed in any way. She reported to the parents that "she had taken all the classes". The behavior plan she developed actually caused the child's behavior to worsen instead of improve. When I stepped in and developed an appropriate behavior plan, his behaviors quickly decreased and he is now enrolled in gifted classes with children several years older than he is. Having a license for behavior analysts would help prevent parents from obtaining services from untrained individuals.

A license for behavior analysts would also assist with reciprocity across state lines. Currently, 20 states have regulatory boards for the practice of behavior analysis including the states that surround us: New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.

In closing, thank you for taking the time to listen to us today and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions regarding this testimony.